

New York Yearly Meeting

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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QUAKERS SUPPORT RELIGIOUS WITNESS OF NY STATE SENATE CANDIDATE SARA NICCOLI

A response to anonymous criticisms of her principled refusal to say the Pledge of Allegiance

[July 28, 2016; New York, NY] At its annual gathering the New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (commonly called Quakers) approved a public statement of support for Sara Niccoli's witness to a single standard of truth. The text of that statement appears below.

Full text of New York Yearly Meeting's statement of support:

Our member Sara Niccoli recognizes the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States as a loyalty oath that is inconsistent with her faith as a Friend (Quaker). New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, the assembly of Quakers in New York, southwestern Connecticut and northern New Jersey, supports Sara's exercise of conscience and religion in standing respectfully silent during ceremonial recitations of the Pledge.

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said:

"Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.' But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. . . . Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one." (Matthew 5:33-37 (NIV))

For more than 350 years, Friends have sought to faithfully live out Christ's teaching. Their Testimony of Integrity by adherence to a single standard of truth became well-known. Indeed, the earliest Friends were imprisoned by the thousands for their refusal to take oaths in any setting, where they were often required simply to suppress Quaker dissent from the Church of England. The New York State Constitution provides for

freedom of conscience. The United States Constitution explicitly allows simple affirmation of the truth in lieu of any required oath.

Faith and Practice, New York Yearly Meeting's book of discipline, challenges Friends to ask themselves, collectively and individually:

"Do we participate actively and intelligently in the political life of our country? Are we conscientious in fulfilling all obligations of state and society that are not contrary to the leading of God? Do we do all in our power to secure civil rights for all? Do we emphasize the single standard of truth, and are we free from the use of oaths?"

Sara Niccoli's engagement in political life is faithful to Jesus's instruction and to her conscience, even as it reflects and advances American ideals of both participatory democracy and religious tolerance. We support her religious witness.

Lucinda Antrim
Clerk, New York Yearly Meeting

Christopher Sammond
General Secretary, New York Yearly Meeting

About New York Yearly Meeting

New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) is the denominational organization comprising the Quaker meetings (congregations) in New York State, northern New Jersey, and southwestern Connecticut. First established in 1695, New York Yearly Meeting has approximately 3,400 members. It is called a "yearly meeting" because it meets annually as a gathered body to consider the work laid upon it by God's Holy Spirit. For more information about the Yearly Meeting, visit www.nyym.org or call 212-673-5750.

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